

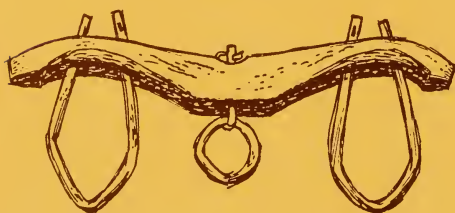
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McCorison, J. L. Jr.  
The great Lincoln Collec-  
tions and what became of  
them

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MEMORIAL

*the Class of 1901*

*founded by*

HARLAN HOYT HORNER

*and*

HENRIETTA CALHOUN HORNER



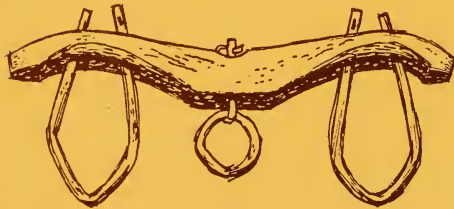


# **The Great Lincoln Collections and What Became of Them**

by

J. L. McCORISON, JR.

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# The Great Lincoln Collections and What Became of Them

by  
J. L. McCORISON, JR.

Editors Note: This article was originally prepared as a lecture and was presented by Dr. McCorison to the Boston Public Library on February 6, 1947. This was the concluding lecture in the *Lincoln Era Series*. Within the last few weeks the lecture has been rewritten and revised for this issue of the *Lincoln Herald*.

## I

In the early summer of 1924, Gamaliel Bradford began a biographical portrait of Mary Todd Lincoln which he intended as part of a proposed volume on the "Souls of American Women", and which was published in 1925 under the title of "Wives". The subject of this portrait was everywhere obscure, but for him it was strangely interesting and absorbing. He found "plenty of gossip about her, but precious few facts...And then all the time back of Mrs. Lincoln there" was "the puzzling, alluring, haunting, almost magical figure of that strange, gigantic Lincoln."... "The way in which her masterful, commonplace personality tangled up with his strange, disorderly, original genius" was "most fascinating." What enthralled Bradford was "this personality of Lincoln," his "infinite tolerance, the unlimited understanding, 'with malice toward none and charity for all.'" And as the summer wore on he found himself more and more "closely involved with the tremendous, brooding shadow of Lincoln, and his strange mixture of jest and misery."

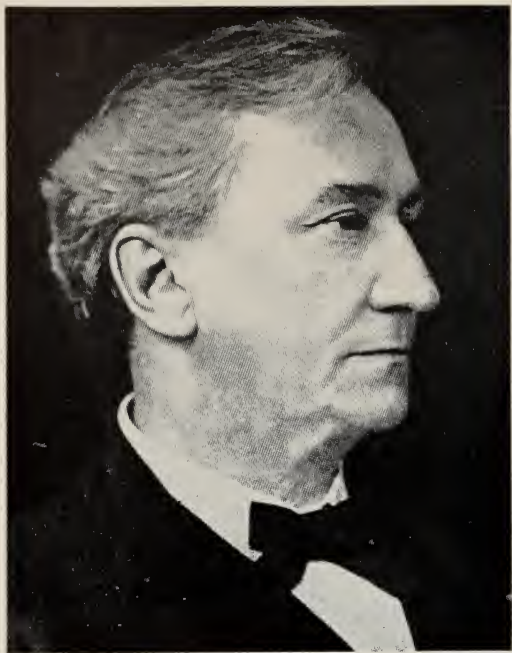
Certainly he was not the first to be caught by "that vastly curious spirit, that extraordinary combination of grotesque simplicity and intellectual and moral power." In his Journal he confesses that "the very universality of the fascination" of Lincoln had up to that moment always deterred him. Like many another before and since, Bradford was shortly to dis-

cover that "there is no end to the depths and reaches of speculation and query that arise in regard to" Lincoln. The "perfectly enormous...amount of this Lincoln material...overwhelmed and staggered" him.

This strange fascination to which Bradford gives such telling testimony accounts for the paper now before us. From the beginning of his life in New Salem, Lincoln demonstrated a striking capacity for friendship. He won people by a common human quality, a quality, which combined with a massive frame and an undisguised ambition even then set him apart for a destiny beyond the ordinary. Maturity added sombre melancholy and depth to an already complex personality which then as now occasioned wonder, and over the years has led to a proliferation of attempts in books, monographs, sermons, eulogies, lectures, addresses, poems, articles and reminiscences to plumb the depths of his soul and to comprehend the man and his times. The tragic end of his life shocked to a sudden awareness of his greatness a nation habituated to partisan vilification and denigration.

Lincoln's own speeches, letters and legal papers, the Great Debates and the greater utterance born of the controversy of our people constituted the first and still the most important Lincoln literature. A native curiosity of a people concerning their great and near great, together with a grief as sincere as it was sudden and poignant created the first literature about Lincoln. The prairie lawyer had hardly been nominated for the presidency by the tumultuous convention which met at the Wigwam in Chicago when the first of the campaign lives of the Republican candidate came from the press. These biographies were hastily prepared, cheaply pro-





William Harrison Lambert

duced, and widely distributed. Some of them appeared in several editions to meet the instant popular demand for information about this newly risen Star at the West. And when Booth's mad act plunged the nation to the depths of woe, men and women everywhere sought and found some measure of hope, comfort and assurance in the profusion of sermons and eulogies which appeared spontaneously across the land.

What was thus begun has continued in response to the steadily mounting significance of Abraham Lincoln in the history of the American people, until today the body of Lincolniana numbers many thousand items strictly viewed and many more which relate in one way or another to the great Emancipator. With a literature at hand, the collectors of it are not far behind and in September 1865, William V. Spencer, a Boston bookseller, evidencing the collector's interest, published the first bibliography of Lincoln literature. In addition to a list of 231 sermons, eulogies and letters, the volume included the text of some thirty or more other items from Lincoln's

pen. The next year, John Russell Bartlett of Providence, Rhode Island, distinguished as an historian and bibliographer, the Secretary of State for Rhode Island from 1855 until 1872, and Secretary of the Board of Commissioners of the Soldiers National Cemetery at Gettysburg, issued his catalogue of the books and pamphlets relating to the Civil War under the title of the *Literature of the Rebellion*. He enumerated 385 items of Lincolniana among others bearing directly upon the War itself.

At about this time, early in 1866 or during the latter part of 1865, Andrew Boyd of Albany and later of Syracuse, New York, and Charles Henry Hart of Philadelphia began the labors which were to eventuate in their celebrated *Memorial Lincoln Bibliography* which was published in Albany in 1870. Boyd and Hart were assiduous collectors. Each pursued his own ideas as a consequence of which their relations were not always the most harmonious or amicable. At any event, they produced a notable volume of which F. Lauriston Bullard, the former chief editorial writer of the Boston *Herald*, has remarked, "Doubtless this 1870 Bibliography will always be accepted as the foundation for the great Lincolniana edifice that has since been erected." The Boyd bibliography lists 910 titles of all descriptions, exclusive of relics, medals, playing cards and other miscellanea. It was to remain for more than thirty years the standard work of reference in this field and the guide to all serious collectors of Lincolniana. Even now it is a work of very great importance.

At the turn of the century additional bibliographical aids began to appear which testify to the rise of new personalities among Lincoln collectors and to highly specialized interests in the collection of Lincolniana. In 1900, Daniel Fish of Minneapolis published his *Lincoln Literature. A Bibliographical Account of Books and Pamphlets relating to Abraham Lincoln*. This was a paper covered volume of 135 pages and was issued by the



Public Library Board of Minneapolis in an edition of 160 copies. It was however a work of such magnitude that it speedily replaced Boyd as an authority, and was re-issued in a revised and greatly enlarged edition in 1906. Fish was a Lincoln scholar of the first rank and his eminence was everywhere recognized. In his compilation of Lincoln books and pamphlets "every reasonable effort" was "made to exhaust the field... The leading collections of Lincolniana" were freely opened to him. "The chief libraries of both Europe and America" were visited, "extensive correspondence ...carried on, and scores of catalogues examined." His bibliography is therefore another bench-mark of permanent significance and ranks among the three or four great works of its kind.

In the meantime, George Thomas Ritchie prepared the well-known Library of Congress check list of Lincolniana which was first published in 1903, and intended merely "as an inventory of the books and pamphlets on the shelves in the biographical section of the Library." The next step in advance was made by Joseph Benjamin Oakleaf of Moline, Illinois, who in 1925 brought out his *Lincoln Bibliography* in which he undertook to supplement the comprehensive work of Daniel Fish. The latter had listed 1106 titles all told, including variants. To this impressive total, Oakleaf added 1576 new items and brought his project begun in 1919 to such a successful conclusion that he has been firmly placed among the top-most Lincolnians. Even so the work was not done. Each successive publication brought to light items which for one reason or another had eluded the previous investigators, and in 1926 John William Starr, Jr., of Millersburg, Pennsylvania, printed privately *A Bibliography of Lincolniana* which listed 380 additional items not included in the compilations of Fish and Oakleaf. Finally, and perhaps most important of all in terms of exact definition and rigid adherence to that definition which excluded many publications previously listed but not technically Lincolniana, the Illinois State

Historical Society published in 1945 the definitive bibliography to date. This is the *Lincoln Bibliography 1839-1939* in two volumes by Jay Monaghan of Springfield, Illinois. Mr. Monaghan spent five years in the preparation of the materials contained in these volumes and has listed 3958 books and pamphlets which would be accepted anywhere as Lincolniana by the most exacting tests.

It is not our purpose to trace in detail the rise and growing extent of this remarkable body of literature about one of the truly remarkable personalities of all history, to which the successive bibliographies bear witness. This would be a dull, highly technical and time consuming operation. For example, "the annotated bibliography of the biographies of Abraham Lincoln issued during the campaign year" prepared by Ernest James Wessen of Mansfield, Ohio, describes with scientific accuracy each of the twenty-one separate titles and variants which are included within this category. To do so requires thirty pages of finely printed text in the annual publication for 1937 of the Illinois State Historical Society. A more general "Survey of Lincoln Literature" is presented by Dr. Roy P. Basler in chapter one of his very excellent volume *The Lincoln Legend* and requires nearly fifty pages of text. And William E. Barton discusses the seven ages of Lincoln biography from the beginnings in 1860 to 1928 in an essay of some sixty pages entitled *The Lincoln of the Biographers*, in the course of which he refers to or describes briefly 213 of these biographies in English and other languages. These fugitive references by no means exhaust the books about the books about Abraham Lincoln, but they serve as an introduction to a fascinating field for recreational reading or for more earnest and detailed study. We are concerned rather with the process by which some of the more significant collections were brought together and preserved; with a consideration of the factors and motives which account in part at least for this activity, and what fate ultimately was accord-

ed to the patient labor of so many earnest and devoted followers of Lincoln.

## II

It may be that between 1860 and 1865 persons here and there assembled and preserved materials which today would be accepted as Lincolniana, but there is no record of any such activity except for the repeated requests for autographs encountered in Lincoln's correspondence and an occasional request for a photograph. In late October 1860, the Library of Congress reported in a catalogue just then going to the press the possession of the *Life of Lincoln* by William Dean Howells and a copy of the Lincoln and Douglas Debates. The collecting of Lincolniana was to begin in earnest at the death of Lincoln and, in its earliest stages, was of the most nondescript character. Anything, even slightly associated with the late President, was preserved. A correspondent to the *Cincinnati Commercial* records that "the rage for relics in this country is something astounding. A respectably dressed man was noticed the other day putting in his pocket a brick from the wall in front of Mr. Lincoln's house, and this is but one of ten thousand follies...An elm tree which Abraham Lincoln planted stands in front of his old house in Springfield. It will be torn to pieces..." As a consequence, some of the earlier collections included large accumulations of relics, curios, furniture, clothing, locks of hair, funeral badges and medals, as well as the more familiar sermons, books, pamphlets and other printed materials with which we are primarily concerned. But the more serious collectors were more eager to catch and preserve the spirit of the man while memory of him was still green. One of the first of these efforts resulted in an anthology compiled by Edward Everett Hale and his friend, John Williams, which was published in Boston in June 1865. The volume known as *The President's Words* was occasioned by the necessities of the funeral services held on April 19, 1865, and for which it seemed to Mr. Hale, "most fit to read from the Presi-

dent's own words, of trust in the people, and faith in God, some of the expressions in which for years he has been the providential teacher of this nation..."

Of even greater import for the purposes of history was the indefatigable labor of William Herndon. From the day in December 1844, when the rampant Herndon became the junior partner in the firm of Lincoln and Herndon, Billy Herndon was Lincoln's most ardent admirer and closest friend. So closely did the younger man observe the emergence of Lincoln the man of destiny, that in December 1860, Herndon boasted "I know Lincoln better than he knows himself." and when death cut Lincoln's life short, it became Herndon's oft spoken desire to write *the* life of the man he loved so deeply. Immediately, he launched upon the project. In quest of first hand information, he engaged in a most extensive correspondence with the people who had known Lincoln, or he interviewed them and obtained detailed statements covering incidents long passed. Everywhere he followed his intent with unyielding tenacity and insatiable curiosity. The biography which he was eventually to write waited nearly a quarter of a century before coming from the press, but during the earlier years he assembled an amazing collection of manuscripts and reminiscences, so detailed and complete, as to place all subsequent collectors, biographers and students of Lincoln in his debt. Herndon's fortunate association over twenty years, his vigilant observation of the man and his strong personal attachment to Abraham Lincoln enabled him in time to become "the personal depository of the larger part of the most valuable Lincolniana in existence."

Herndon was a poor man and the absorption of his energies as Lincoln's Boswell did not enhance his meagre livelihood. He was also a generous man and freely gave of the information he had so freely received. He encouraged others in their labors. For example, in a letter to Charles Henry Hart dated at Spring-

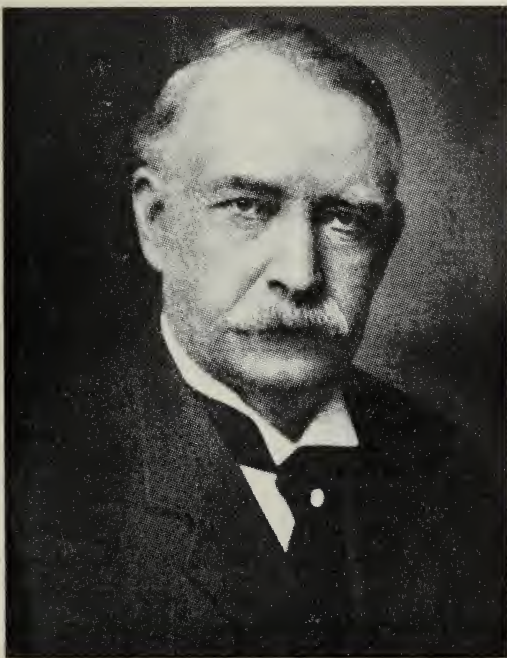


field, Illinois, March 9, 1866, he writes, "the idea which you suggest about publishing a list of the sermons, eulogies, etc., is a good one, and should be done." Still later, with palpable solicitude, he again wrote to Hart, "I hope I said nothing in any of my hurried notes to you, throwing cold water upon your highly important undertaking." And in one of the earliest letters to this friend (January 8, 1866) he regrets that he has no "autograph letters of Mr. Lincoln now - gave all away - am sorry I cannot accomodate you." In 1869, while retaining possession of the originals, he sold drafts of his papers to Ward Hill Lamon, a legal associate of Lincoln's, whom the latter appointed as Marshal of the District of Columbia and in 1872 produced a controversial life of the War President. Through the agency of George D. Smith, the Lamon copies found their way into the Huntington Library at San Marino, California. Herndon employed the originals as the nucleus of his own biography of Lincoln, which was eventually written in collaboration with Jesse W. Weik of Greencastle, Indiana. These invaluable and irreplaceable documents pass-

ed to Weik at Herndon's death, who in turn retained possession of them until his demise.. They were then sold to a dealer in New York and later acquired by the Library of Congress.

The foundation of the Lincoln collection at the Library of Congress, however, was laid many years earlier with the purchase in 1873 of the collection gathered by Andrew Boyd. This body of materials was described at the time of purchase as the "largest Lincoln collection extant." It comprised about 1500 books and pamphlets, medals, portraits, handbills, tokens, etc., and was acquired by the Library at a cost of \$1000. - a bargain even then. In the transfer, Mr. Boyd retained possession of "such books and pamphlets as" were "already in the Library." These aggregated about 200 items, and indicate the approximate extent of the published materials available in the Library at the time. Between the acquisition of the Boyd Collection and the Herndon-Weik papers, the Library of Congress received in 1926 the gift of the Abraham Lincoln papers then in the possession of the president's son, the Honorable Robert Todd Lincoln, and which on July 26, 1947, after the expiration of the 21 year period stipulated in the deed of gift, were opened to the American people. This extraordinary gift of Robert Lincoln, since augmented by other important gifts from members of Mr. Lincoln's family, in addition to the holdings already at its command place our magnificent national library in the forefront in the extent and value of its Lincoln Collections.

Following Herndon and Boyd, the collecting of Lincolniana entered upon its most exciting period—a period dominated by the so-called "Big Five". This period was to witness the more careful definition of what comprised Lincolniana, the rise of specialized collecting, and the creation of those monumental accumulations which have since enriched lesser labors and permanently influenced all subsequent collecting. It is improbable that any one of the collections brought into being by Major William Har-



Daniel Fish

rison Lambert of Philadelphia; Judd Stewart of Plainfield, New Jersey; Charles Woodberry McLellan of New York City and Champlain, New York; Daniel Fish of Minneapolis, and Joseph Benjamin Oakleaf of Moline, Illinois could today be duplicated, admitting for the moment that such an endeavor would be desirable. These men were contemporaries and helpful competitors. They were also individualists and each assiduously followed his own bent. Individually and collectively the achievement of these men is so phenomenal that present day collectors look back upon it with wonder and wistful envy. Together, they dominated the field of Lincolniana, almost-but not quite - to the exclusion of serious outside rivalry. Unknown to them, another giant was in the making in the person of John E. Burton of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin and later of Milwaukee, who had been gathering quietly his own fine and extensive library of materials relating to Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War. These five men, with Mr. Burton, owned libraries which approached completeness, as none has since. But Burton was a late comer and had pursued his collecting independently of the collaborationist activities of the Big Five. The latter came to respect Burton as a rival, but they never fully accepted him as one of their group and Fish was to raise doubts as to the extent of legitimate Lincolniana in Burton's holdings.

In order of importance, Lambert stood at the top of the heap, with McLellan a close second. Then followed Fish, Stewart, Oakleaf and Burton. Of these great collections two were to be dispersed at public auction; two were to find grateful preservation in University libraries, and two others were purchased in toto for incorporation into other subordinate and/or complementary collections in semi-public institutions.

The Lambert collection represented the labor of forty years. It has never been surpassed as a single entity, and it was the first to be dispersed. It owed its inception to a copy of J. G. Holland's *Life of Abraham Lin-*

*coln* which Major Lambert received in early manhood as a gift from his father. The book impressed him and he purchased others. Within a few years, he set about earnestly to acquire everything listed in the Boyd-Hart "Memorial Bibliography," and to facilitate his purpose he purchased the entire collection of Charles Henry Hart, and not the Boyd collection as reported by Judd Stewart, Daniel Fish and others. Among these new possessions were the books from Lincoln's library which Hart had received as a gift from Herndon, together with the sermons and eulogies he had gathered in the course of his bibliographical pursuits. In 1908, Lambert possessed all but 124 titles of the known printed books and pamphlets about Abraham Lincoln, and a large and highly important collection of autograph material. The magnitude of Lambert's achievement is heightened when it is recalled that in June 1906 his collection was seriously damaged in a fire that nearly destroyed his home in Germantown. He undertook immediately to repair the damage and to acquire every item listed in the Fish *Lincoln Bibliography* not already in his possession. The speed with which he recovered from this loss is a testimony to his precedence among collectors. He was indeed "the chief of the tribe."

While Lambert has been described as a dilattante, it must be admitted that he was also something of a scholar. His critical study of the Gettysburg Address published in 1909 possesses considerable merit and importance. He edited certain unpublished Lincoln letters in his collection (the Lincoln-Trumbull correspondence extending from 1856 to 1860) which covered a period of political development of first importance; and he was for many years a serious interpreter of Abraham Lincoln. In one paper, he reviewed Lincoln's administration. In another, he examined critically the position of Herndon and Ward Hill Lamon with reference to Lincoln's religious faith. Like any seasoned bibliophile, Lambert well knew that "the most precious





Judd Stewart

and lasting Lincoln literature." would. . "always be that of his own [Lincoln's] writing," and in an address before the Military Order of the Loyal Legion in Pennsylvania in February 1909, he presented the general growth of the Lincoln literature as a striving to understand Lincoln, to harmonize the contradictions and to correct the obvious misinterpretations of successive writers. Major Lambert died on June 1, 1912 and in order that other collectors might have a chance to obtain some portion of his treasures his collection was dispersed in two sales in January and April 1914 which aggregated 2770 separate lots. The next year, the Burton collection went to the auction block.

Lambert's nearest competitor, both in the size and quality of his collection, was Charles Woodberry McLellan, a native of Beverly, and later of East Boston, Massachusetts. As a young man, McLellan was engaged in business in Springfield, Illinois, and had there an opportunity for a fleeting acquaintance with the Lincolns. He has related one instance of a call at the Lincoln home, and early in the

summer of 1860, he sent to the *Boston Journal* "an excellent photograph of Hon. Abraham Lincoln, the Republican candidate for the Presidency, and who will be the next incumbent of that office. It is of large size, and ...a faithful likeness." During the Civil War, however, he served in the Confederate States Army, following which he launched upon a highly successful business career in New York City. The book Billy Herndon wanted so much to write about the life of his great friend, re-awakened McLellan's interest in the gaunt prairie lawyer he had known in Illinois. This interest and the bibliography which Daniel Fish brought out in 1900 started McLellan as a collector—an avocation which soon upon his retirement from business became a vocation and was continued at Champlain, New York, up to the time of Mr. McLellan's death in 1918. Collecting is a sport in which each participant draws up his own specifications and consequently each wins a prize. With means at his command, McLellan collected extensively in Europe and in this way obtained many of the rarities that made his collection so unique. Ransacking catalogues of European dealers, he not infrequently came upon (American) publications unknown in this country and was able to recover unsuspected treasures here at home. He acquired a rich and varied body of autograph materials, and he found the periodical literature dealing with Lincoln of particular interest. He purchased quantities of the latter despite the fact that these items even then were not classified as Lincolniana. With the exception of the periodicals, the McLellan Collection was purchased in 1923 by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and presented to the Brown University Library in Providence. This superb benefaction, supplemented by other important purchases, has created at Brown University a Lincoln Collection which very seriously rivals, if it does not outrank that in the Library of Congress.

The collection of Judd Stewart was a curious creation. Mr. Stewart was perhaps the

least discriminating member of the Big Five, or perhaps he allowed himself more latitude; and he was omniverous. Everything from envelopes to engravings, from medals to manuscripts, from books to ballads was legitimate game for his purposes so long as it was related at some point to Abraham Lincoln. But this does not mean that his work was unimportant. Even with such broad-gauged blasts some prime game would fall and among his vast accumulations are to be found such choice items as Lincoln's touchingly beautiful letter to the parents of Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, and the O. H. Browning copy of the galley proof of the First Inaugural. And there are many other notable pieces worthy of mention. This collection was purchased in its entirety in 1922 by Henry E. Huntington for his Library at San Marino, California. Huntington had made his first purchases of Lincolniana at the first session of the Lambert Sale in 1914, when he obtained some of the choicest of the manuscripts offered, including the Lincoln Trumbull correspondence. Within the year, he added the Lamon papers to his collections and thus increased at a bound the stature of his possessions in this field. Other manuscripts came into his ownership singly and in groups from time to time, but until the purchase of the Stewart collection printed Lincolniana was not strongly represented at the Huntington Library. The mass of books, broadsides, pamphlets, clippings and magazine articles assembled by Stewart, combined with the very important Lambert and the even more important Lamon papers present a most formidable body of Lincolniana. The Huntington Library is today the most important Lincoln library west of the Mississippi and is secure as well in its position among the ranking collection in the country.

If Stewart cut a wide swath in the field of Lincolniana, Joseph Benjamin Oakleaf was the more discerning and limited his interests almost wholly to books and pamphlets. Despite this self-imposed limitation, he acquired a number of valuable letters and manuscripts. Like Herndon before him, he tramped the

country in search of those remaining who had known Lincoln and recorded faithfully their reminiscences of the man. Inevitably, through gift and purchase, other forms of Lincolniana found their way into his library without deterring him from his primary objective which was to preserve the printed record of Lincoln's life in books and pamphlets. Very fittingly on February 12, 1942, Dr. Herman B. Wells, president of Indiana University, announced the purchase of the Oakleaf Collection for the University Library where it was handsomely housed and opened to the public a year later. Judge Oakleaf began his collecting as a consequence of reading the Nicolay and Hay biography as it appeared serially in the *Century* magazine. What was at first an innocent desire to possess all the other biographies of Lincoln became in fact that first step in many culminating at last in one of the finest of such specialized collections.

If Lambert was the chief of the Big Five in terms of the sheer variety of his riches, Daniel Fish easily stands as the scholar of this group. The results of his labor as a collector were in themselves not inferior to his contemporaries. His collection showed the usual campaign lives, the sermons and eulogies, the printed books, the manuscripts and the other memorabilia associated with Lincolniana; but his name is indissolubly conjoined with his great bibliography which Jay Monaghan rightly describes as "the first comprehensive bibliography of Lincolniana" and was in itself a preeminent literary accomplishment. En route to his home following his discharge from the Union army in 1865, Fish purchased a copy of *The Presidents Words*. He was at the time a lad of 17 years. He lost the book and did not miss it until many years later when he was invited to address a group on any subject he might choose. He chose Lincoln, and having chosen his subject he found an occupation which was to keep him busy until his work on earth was done. He began with the biographies and was astonished by



their number. Seeking guidance from Boyd's *Memorial Bibliography* he discovered that "more than half of the entries" in Boyd's part of this composite work were unsuited to his purpose of gathering a copy of each of the known lives of Lincoln. He relates how he spurned other attractive items and how "old man Charles Woodward in Nassau Street, New York"...had vainly offered to him at a few cents each "a hundred or more of the pamphlet sermons and eulogies." Only later did Judge Fish set out in conformity with convention to accumulate a more complete Lincoln library and, by that time, these very pieces that he had refused earlier to buy cost him many dollars each to acquire.

But it is to Daniel Fish, more than to any other, that we are indebted for the practice of specialized collecting which now with the turning years has become a matter of necessity rather than of choice. It is to him that we are indebted for the first definitions by which the limits and identity of Lincolniana could be established. As his collection grew in size, he developed a card catalogue which in time became his *Lincoln Literature* and the criterion by which such literature for many years was to be judged. Following his death, his entire collection was purchased in 1924 by Arthur F. Hall of Fort Wayne, Indiana, as the cornerstone of the congeries of collections comprising the Lincoln National Life Foundation at Fort Wayne.

### III

It was inevitable that with the passing of the Big Five the pattern of Lincoln collecting should change and that collectors of this literature seeking new fields for conquest should venture out in untraveled ways. Practical needs, if nothing else, dictated that collecting should move more and more toward intensified specialization. The imposing mass of existing materials augmented by the productive researches of historians and new works issuing from the presses with increasing frequency, together with the need for the re-interpretation of older positions in the light

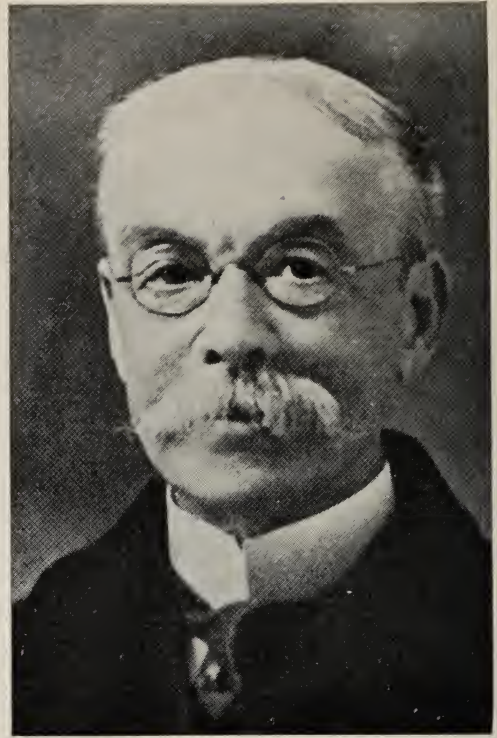
of new knowledge about Lincoln have been decisive in this connection. Many of the items appearing in the older bibliographies are mere trivia, and, though bona fide Lincolniana, of no significance apart from such collections in which completeness was the sole aim. It is interesting also to observe that the collectors during the middle years frequently began collecting as a result of the casual reading of a life of Lincoln, or some other equally fortuitous circumstance, and that collecting itself proceeded more by agglutination than by deliberate planning. It may be that during the period we are about to consider, the impulses to collect were as unpremeditated; but the impulse led to selection and to intensive development. In a paper read in Washington, D. C., before a joint meeting of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association and the American Historical Association, James G. Randall of the University of Illinois and author of the most scholarly of recent Lincoln biographies, pointed out some fifteen years ago that despite abundant abuse by the amateur, the Lincoln collecting is no less extensive than the theme itself, and Randall enumerated many new and worthy fields for study and research, fields which in many instances had been consistently neglected because of the narrowly defined limits of Lincolniana.

Among these collectors are admittedly men of lesser stature than some, but whose works are none the less worthy of mention. Dr. John Wesley Hill, a former chancellor of the Lincoln Memorial University, was more concerned with the books Lincoln read and which so largely influenced his thinking than with the books about Lincoln which have been the pre-occupation of other collectors. An imposing array of such books was gathered by Dr. Hill and presented by his son in 1944 to Columbia University. Charles T. White, a former Brooklyn newspaper man now living in retirement at Hancock, New York, found in Lincoln's consistent attitude toward the organized liquor traffic a sufficient

warrant for gathering everything within reach bearing on this subject.

Of different character is Otto Eisenschiml, a chemist of Chicago, who for a long time had been disturbed by the question, "Why was Lincoln murdered?" - a question which he later used as the title of his first book. Dr. Eisenschiml was further disturbed by the unsatisfactory nature of the answers given to this question. He set about to discover something more convincing and in the process has acquired a library of some 3,000 books all of them related to one aspect or another of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. He thinks what he has gathered should be called an "assassination library", rather than a Lincoln collection, because he has never regarded himself as a conventional collector. He is a student, engaged with a single problem for which he needs specific materials. He possesses a copy of every book and pamphlet pertaining to Lincoln's death and an exhaustive collection of manuscripts and photostats. What ever else he may have in the collection is regarded as subordinate.

Periodical literature has always presented a special problem to collectors, which has not yet been completely solved. That it possesses permanent and undeniable value is immediately evident, but unless the separate articles have been re-printed with a pagination different from the original printing they are not to be found in any of the bibliographies. This inconvenience has not ever deterred the enthusiast. Charles W. McLellan collected extensively in this field, as did Stewart, but these items, excluded in the McLellan sale which saw the transfer of his collection to Brown University, were later acquired by Albert H. Greenly of New York City, and with large additions presented with the remarkable working library of Lincoln source materials which Mr. Greenly gave to the William Clements Library at the University of Michigan. However, it remained for Albert H. Griffith of Fiske, Wisconsin to pre-empt this area as his own peculiar possession. Beginning



Charles Woodberry McLellan

in 1900, Mr. Griffith assembled during the following years an enormous amount of such periodicals and news clippings, and created a collection as distinctive in its own way as many others better known to history. The whole collection which nearly filled the house in which Mr. Griffith lived in rural Wisconsin was acquired as a constituent part of the Lincoln National Life Foundation where it completes at important junctures the collection of Daniel Fish.

These personal predilections add zest to the collecting of Lincolniana and account in part at least for the manifold interests of those comprising the Lincoln fraternity. William H. Townsend of Lexington, Kentucky, is a Kentuckian distinguished alike as a collector, an author and a raconteur. He possesses a large and very fine collection of manuscripts and relics, which is supplemented by ample basic printed materials for a comprehensive study of Lincoln's life and times. Among his manuscripts is a unique and highly valuable body



of the letters of Mary Todd Lincoln. Over many years of patient collecting, Judge James W. Bollinger of Davenport, Iowa has created a general Lincoln library of nearly 3000 items, which it is reported will some day pass to the Library of the State University of Iowa. As a special hobby interest, Judge Bollinger is particularly enthusiastic about biographies of Lincoln in foreign languages and other "books and pamphlets expressing an appreciation of Lincoln by people of other nations." He has practically exhausted this field. At Detroit, Michigan, Thomas I. Starr who had a large and important part in the discovery of Lincoln's Kalamazoo Address of 1856, has also gathered a general collection of printed Lincolniana of substantial proportions. This activity has been supplemented by a highly specialized interest in carte-de-visite photographs in which area Mr. Starr has become a recognized authority among Lincolnians. Following his own bent, Carl W. Schaefer, an attorney of Cleveland, Ohio has gathered an unusual collection of choice items of interest to every Lincoln student. The vast majority of these has been presented from time to time to Lincoln Memorial University, while retaining in his own possession books in fine bindings; and others with fore-edge paintings; deluxe editions of Lincoln's works; rare Lincoln photographs and miniature statuary, together with such rare collateral materials as the *John Hay Diary*.

Photographs, portraits and engravings of Lincoln present problems of their own. These items figured to a greater or lesser extent in all collections from the beginning, and several of the larger collections had substantial sections given to them. Yet with two exceptions - and only one of which is truly significant - little has ever been done to bring order out of the vast and chaotic mass of the likenesses of Lincoln. The one exception to which I referred is of course the superlative collection of the photographs of Abraham Lincoln to which Frederick Hill Meserve of New York City has devoted fifty years of pain-

staking labor. To recover and preserve plates and prints so fragile and so precious should be a sufficient labor for any one man; but Mr. Meserve is not content to rest there. He is now possessed of every known photograph of Lincoln and has covered the subject with a study so careful and minute as to seemingly exhaust it so far as future researchers are concerned. He has devised the system by which these photographs can be readily identified. He has written two authoritative books dealing with them, and has produced a work in 28 volumes containing portraits of all the leaders of Lincoln's time. Today he has at his command photographic resources of Lincoln and the Civil War bewildering in their immensity and unique among collections of what-ever description.

A work of similar nature, devoted to engravings and other forms of the reproductive arts as they relate to Lincoln, was projected hopefully several years ago by Winfred Truesdell of Champlain, New York. Using Meserve's identifications and numbering as a base, Truesdell issued an edition of 250 copies of one volume - strangely enough Volume II of his *Engraved and Lithographed Portraits of Abraham Lincoln*. His death brought this ambitious project to an abrupt conclusion, and unfortunately it has not since been revived. And equally to be regretted is the fact that no one has yet attempted a comprehensive, critical study and systematic classification of the numerous painted portraits of Lincoln. These present a situation most unsatisfactory and much involved by hearsay, contradiction and downright misinformation.

It would be quite incorrect to imply that general collecting came to a halt with the disposition of the great collections in the decade between 1914 and 1924. That it became less the general practice following this period must be recognized, but inconsistently enough during this same period several significant comprehensive collections came into being. The first of these in order of importance was that of William E. Barton of Foxboro, Massachusetts.

At the time of his death in 1930, Dr. Barton was recognized as the last of the men comparable to the great Lincolnians who had preceded him. And when he died, William Henry Townsend said of him, "there is none left to bend his bow." In scholarship, he was their peer. His great books, beginning with *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln* and continuing with *The Paternity of Abraham Lincoln* deal with the two most controverted points in Lincoln biography. From this ground he moved on to a full length biography and to the consideration of such specific aspects of the Lincoln story as the Bixby Letter, the Gettysburg Address, the women Lincoln loved and the Lincoln lineage. These successive works point out most clearly the way he had been moving as a collector. What he brought together was gathered within a decade.

For a number of years, while living in Oak Park, Illinois, Dr. Barton had served as editor of *The Advance*, a weekly religious journal which featured each year a Lincoln number. He prepared many of the articles which appeared in these issues, basing his writing on what he regarded as the sound material embodied in the Lincoln literature. In this way he came into possession of a fairly large and miscellaneous assortment of Lincoln items. But he became increasingly suspicious of the reliability of some of these books, especially those dealing with Lincoln's religion or his lack of it. He had also gathered from older contemporaries first hand materials about Lincoln. The up shot of his predicament was that he began to look for books and pamphlets on the religion of Lincoln and in 1919 possessed some 300 of these items, which he rightly regarded as "a very respectable...collection." But greatness as a Lincoln collector might easily have escaped Barton had he stopped at that point, and had not a turn of fortune enabled him to acquire "at a bargain" a very substantial part of the collection of John E. Burton which had remained unsold after the sale of 1915. With these new ac-

quisitions and others which he made periodically, Barton found himself enjoying a new status as a collector of Lincolniana. He was to be reckoned with! His collection was housed in the Wigwam on Sunset Lake in Foxboro, and there in the quiet of the surrounding woods, with a broad sheet of water before him to give space to thought and his treasures all within easy reach, he engaged in his last great work, destined to remain unfinished when he was called away.

Barton did not want his Lincoln Library broken up. He had hoped that it might be preserved intact either by his family or in some institution of learning where its usefulness would be perpetuated. This hope was splendidly realized when the entire library passed into the hands of the University of Chicago as the foundation of its own Lincoln collection, now justly regarded as one of our most important.

Dr. Barton was not alone in his avocation. A very special concern had led him to Lincoln; but his contemporary, the Honorable Henry Horner, distinguished alike as Judge of Probate for Cook County, Illinois and as Governor of the prairie state, set out deliberately to build a general collection of printed Lincolniana and then kept at it until he possessed an impressive total of books and pamphlets. These two shared a virtue not too common among collectors - they not only owned their books, they possessed them. Governor Horner bequeathed his library to the Illinois State Historical Library at Springfield where its physical integrity is assured. This gift has strengthened an already massive collection of Lincolniana, rich in manuscripts of the widest diversity and historical significance as well as in those familiar printed items which comprise the bulk of every collection, great or small.

The Illinois State Historical Library, the the Library of Congress, the Huntington Library, the Brown University Library, the Indiana - Oakleaf Collection at Indiana University, the Lincoln Memorial University Department of Lincolniana and the Lincoln Nat-



ional Life Foundation compose the top-ranking group of Lincoln libraries in America. Each of these is distinctive and of great importance in its own right, but their strength is so nearly equal that there is little to differentiate between them. The Illinois State Historical Society is probably the most important of all and the richest in manuscript materials though hard pressed by the Library of Congress, Brown University and the Huntington Library. In sheer massiveness the Lincoln National Life Foundation stands alone, but strongly seconded by the very extensive collection of printed materials of all types possessed by the Illinois State Historical Society and the Lincoln Memorial University. Together these Lincoln libraries with the collections at the University of Chicago, the Chicago Historical Society, and the University of Michigan represent the finest composite effort of Lincolnians over a period of eighty years to preserve in tangible form the memory of our first great American.

Since 1940 other libraries of genuine consequence have been established. These include the Stuart W. Jackson Collection at Yale University, the Clark P. Bissett Collection at the State College of Washington at Pullman, and the Ida M. Tarbell Collection at Allegheny College, Meadville, Pennsylvania. And in addition to those already named, collections of lesser import are now to be found in at least eight other colleges from Maine to California, while the number of libraries with collections sufficiently large to be listed as such is even more impressive.

#### IV

It would appear from this very hasty survey that the greater part of the Lincoln collections have sooner or later found their way into some public or semi-public institution. This is the fortunate truth, despite the fact that an occasional collection such as that of Emanuel Hertz of New York, or that of George P. Hambrecht of Madison, Wisconsin is sold and dispersed. The former practice,

however, assures to posterity the materials so necessary to the understanding of the most crucial period of our history, when the fate of the nation was being decided by force of arms. But there are many collections still in private hands, and the number of collectors of Lincolniana is increasing. An autograph dealer in Battle Creek, Michigan has compiled a list of several hundred of these persons each involved to a greater or lesser degree in this rewarding avocation. It would be misleading to suppose that these collectors and their collections are alike important. Very few indeed come within reach of that category and only the merest fraction of one per cent approach the adjective, great, though there are some of the latter.

Surely one of these is the collection of F. Ray Risdon of Los Angeles. Mr. Risdon is secretary of the Lincoln Fellowship of Southern California and he is undoubtedly the premier collector of Lincolniana on the entire West Coast. Another is that of Alfred Whital Stern of Chicago, who began collecting twenty-five years ago as a consequence of his attempt to assist his son to master reading, a task which the latter had found most difficult. Mr. Stern selected a volume containing the letters of Lincoln because the sentences were short, easy to read, and the whole a fine example of simple, yet superb, English. From this rather unique introduction to the subject, Mr. Stern proceeded to acquire books, pamphlets and manuscripts in such quantity, that today the combined total comprises 4500 separate items. Among his very choice possessions is Lincoln's famous letter of January 26, 1863 in which "he talked...like a father" to General Joseph Hooker when appointing the latter to the command of the Army of the Potomac. A library is always very personal and intimate possession, and no man willingly contemplates the ultimate breaking up of his work of many years. Mr. Stern, like Dr. Barton before him and Mr. Eisenschiml, his fellow-townsmen, hopes to preserve the collection intact. To sell it would be out of keep-

ing with the spirit of Lincoln is his feeling in the matter.

Still another of this small group of private libraries of great dimensions is one gathered over a period of thirty-five years by F. Lauriston Bullard, founder and for the past twelve years the president of the Lincoln Group of Boston. This collection occupies a suite of rooms in his home in Melrose Highlands, Massachusetts, to which Dr. Bullard has given the name "The Lincoln Annex." Very modestly, Dr. Bullard describes his books and pamphlets as a "worker's collection," designed for the serious study of the life and work of Abraham Lincoln. As such, he has sought out and acquired whatever would help him to understand the man and to project his life against its background in American history and human affairs at large. It is a line of approach which Barton himself had followed so fruitfully, but as a consequence, Bullard has become the possessor of substantial bodies of material which do not conform to the conventions of bibliographical definition as *Lincolniana*. Even within these limitations, however, the Bullard collection is a very large

and important corpus, one of the largest in private hands in the country and beyond question the only one of such broad proportions in all New England.

This collection consists almost exclusively of printed items. Manuscripts were for Dr. Bullard a luxury - he possesses but one Lincoln holograph letter, but the lack of these has been supplied by the extensive use of photostats. He has taken a very active interest in periodical literature, again asserting his independence, and in this field alone has brought together a stupendous variety of such articles. Chronologically, these items begin in 1860 and continue down to the present. More than 412 separate serial publications are represented and include articles from popular magazines, historical quarterlies and the journals of learned societies. Some are of foreign origin. Some are violently anti-Lincoln, but each adds something to the history of the period and to the part this man played in it. Dr. Bullard has acquired the diaries of Lincoln's contemporaries; the biographies and the sermons; and the collateral Civil War and Confederate items aggregate nearly a thousand titles.

Dr. Bullard is a nationally recognized Lincoln scholar, a scholarship based on the minute study of the field before him as evidenced by his *Abraham Lincoln and the Widow Bixby* and his earlier works on the Gettysburg Address and the *Diary of a Public Man*, together with a large number of occasional papers. His Lincoln editorials in the *Boston Herald* were factual and instructive - often of necessity setting to right some utterance attributed to Lincoln but submitting the evidence that "Lincoln did not say it," or more affirmatively that "he did," giving the correct text and content. Addressing a group at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester shortly after *Abraham Lincoln, the War Years* had come from the press, Carl Sandburg remarked of Bullard that "he (Bullard) knows more about Lincoln and the War years than any man in America." Now past four



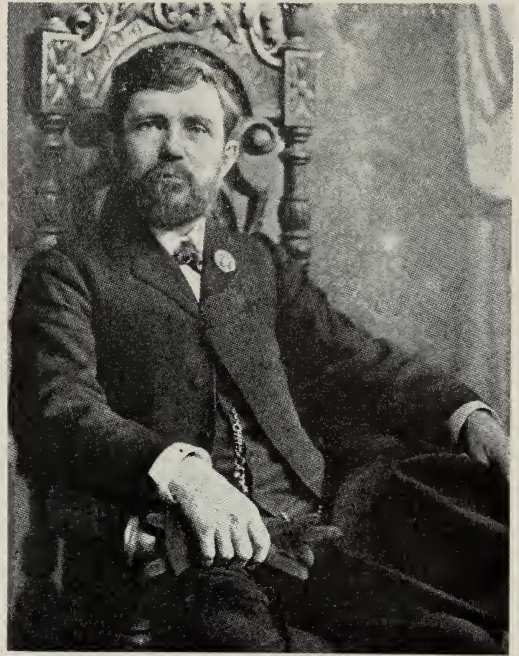
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score years, Dr. Bullard continues his unremitting labors to perfect his collection. He has prepared a card catalogue of his library; he has excerpted and bound most of his magazine articles and indexed all of them so that he can find what he wants instantly; and he is now engaged in preparing a cross indexing catalogue of everything he possesses to facilitate its use.

Very fittingly, we have reserved for the last the consideration of the surpassing collection of Oliver R. Barrett of Chicago. So tremendous is the achievement of Mr. Barrett that one can only speak of it in continuous superlatives. It alone among private collections of Lincoln literature deserves the accolade of true distinction. It is the largest single collection in private hands. It is the best in terms of value. It is the most important in the profusion and rarity of its manuscripts. In the range of its holdings, the Barrett Collection is only superceded by the Illinois State Historical Library and the Library of Congress. So extensive are these riches that sooner or later every serious Lincoln student or investigator is obliged to consult with the documents which Mr. Barrett has so carefully preserved, and so generously shares.

Printed Lincolniana figure but incidentally in this foremost assemblage. Mr. Barrett has turned to the letters to Lincoln; to the letters of Mrs. Lincoln, Willie and Tad; to the letters and manuscripts about Lincoln written by his contemporaries and associates; and, reflecting his training in the Law, to the letters and manuscripts relating to the assassination of Lincoln and the trial of the conspirators. He possesses a collection of early newspapers containing notices of Lincoln, and an amazing collection of daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, photographs, engravings, lithographs and oil portraits of Lincoln. All of these are further augmented by a fabulous collection of Civil War Orders, letters and official documents; broadsides, and personal relics, poems and sheet music, and all in such abundance as to be breath-taking.



John E. Burton

The story back of this prodigy among Lincoln collections is full of human interest. Carl Sandburg, years ago in the Preface to the *Prairie Years* commented that "Oliver Barrett requires further portraiture." It is gratifying therefore that Sandburg is himself reputedly engaged upon such a man-sized narrative of Barrett and of the truly great literary monument he has erected.

Oliver Barrett was fortunate on two counts. First, he was born in Jacksonville, Morgan County, Illinois, and grew up in Pittsfield in the adjoining county of Pike, the latter made famous by *The Pike County Ballads* of John Hay. This was a section of Illinois, rich in Lincoln lore. His father had been a friend of Lincoln and a conductor on the underground railroad, who later sought aid in Europe for the Freedman's Aid Society. His mother told him these things and many more when he was a boy, and her understanding of her son was the second count.

It was from his mother that he learned the story of Abraham Lincoln. It was she who took him to Springfield - his first ride

on a railroad train, to visit the Lincoln shrines and from other lips to hear more of the story of a great life. And one day later, having found an envelope among some papers stored in a box in the attic of their home, he learned from her the value of a document. The envelope was marked "very precious" in his father's hand. It was an autograph letter signed by Robert Burns which had been given to his father by the niece of the poet who spoke so eloquently of Lincoln. And so he discovered that letters written by important people were interesting in themselves and worthy of preservation.

At fifteen years of age, Oliver Barrett was a collector of letters and manuscripts, the photographs of Lincoln and the memories preserved by other people who had known him. He had a "passion for the genuine", and by it he has saved from oblivion many perishable items which would otherwise have been lost had he not sought them out. Barrett is still collecting and his work grows in magnitude with each passing year. What will become of his great work, none knows; Mr. Barrett himself is still undecided.

## V

And now to conclude! There is a growing body of reference material available to any person whose curiosity has been aroused sufficiently to desire a more intimate acquaintance with Abraham Lincoln. One of these invitations to adventure is the excellent essay "Lincoln's Development as a Writer" by Roy P. Basler which appears in his edition of *Abraham Lincoln's his speeches and writings*

published in September 1946. Paul M. Angle's *A Shelf of Lincoln Books*, published by the Rutgers University Press in 1946 is a selected and intelligent guide to Lincoln's life and writings prepared by a very competent scholar.

In the field of bibliography, nothing is yet superior to Jay Monaghan's monumental *Lincoln Bibliography, 1839-1939* published in two volumes. His Introduction, in Volume I, is particularly helpful. An interesting paper by Albert H. Griffith, with the title *Lincoln Literature, Lincoln Collections and Lincoln Collectors* was printed in the *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, for December 1931. The essay is as the title indicates a survey of the field of Lincolniana as of that period. In it Mr. Griffith identifies and describes briefly a number of the collections notable at the time and some which have gone to greater stature. More detailed information of the significant Lincoln collections a decade later will be found in a well-edited series of articles in the *Abraham Lincoln Quarterly*.

Another valuable aid will be found in the annotated bibliography which James G. Randall has incorporated in his *Lincoln the President*, Volume II, pages 343 to 400. Sandburg's Preface to his *Abraham Lincoln, the Prairie Years*, and the Foreward to *The War Years*, are worth frequent reading if one would catch the spirit of the men who write our books about Lincoln, and through which we walk into the presence of the great good man himself.













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